

RECOVERY ACT BROADBAND PROJECTS WILL BRING JOBS, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY TO RURAL COMMUNITIES ON EASTERN SHORE

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators **Benjamin L. Cardin** and **Barbara A. Mikulski** (both D-MD) announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded a \$3.2-million grant to bring last-mile broadband service to rural areas of Maryland's Eastern Shore. The Rural Utilities Service broadband grant was given to Bloosurf, a Maryland company, to build out high-speed broadband service through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

This award will allow Bloosurf – in partnership with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and the Maryland Broadband Cooperative – to build a wireless last-mile network for the rural areas of Worcester, Somerset and Wicomico counties, as well as Smith Island. The project creates jobs now and provides a foundation for solid economic growth in the future.

“Internet access is critical to the economy of the 21st Century and this Recovery Act funding will ensure completion of the high-speed, broadband service to Worcester, Somerset and Wicomico counties and Smith Island,” said **Senator Cardin**. “This funding will ensure that residents and businesses on the Eastern Shore have much-needed broadband service and it will help to create jobs and spur economic growth.”

“To help rural Maryland compete globally, we must expand high-speed technology locally,” **Senator Mikulski** said. “This grant will help communities in Eastern Maryland connect to the information superhighway, as well as support new jobs, help small businesses and boost economic growth.”

Leveraging \$160,000 in private contribution, this network will provide 4G broadband to homes and businesses on the lower shore. About 126,000 people stand to benefit, as well as about 6,000 businesses and 351 community institutions.

In addition to this USDA grant program, Eastern Shore and other Maryland communities submitted applications for Recovery Act funding through the Department of Commerce's Broadband Technology Opportunity Program. Those awards are still pending.

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